

## The Benefits of Fearing God, Part 2

Luke 12:10-12

We are wrapping up what we started last Sunday, just a message on the benefits of fearing God and today, we're looking at Luke 12:10 through 12, where Jesus speaks about our spirit-instructed witness to the truth. Again, this section is going to be on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and it's kind of an early preview because the Spirit, according to what we read in Acts Chapter 2, had not yet come to the church. There was not a birth of the church in Luke 12, but this is a preview.

And the preview comes, as we've been saying, Luke chapter 12, in the context of hostility, in an environment of conflict and opposition to the truth. And so the question we kind of want to think about as we enter into these verses is: How can we, today, as Christians know that we will stand firm and confess Christ when it counts? We've just come out of last week's instruction in verses 8 and 9. "Everyone who confesses or acknowledges me



before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God.”

So obviously, there is going to be a time when we need to confess loyalty to Jesus Christ, and it’s going to cost us. So how do we know we’re going to do that when it counts? How do we know we’re going to make the good confession and especially if we come under some kind of extreme duress?

We have been, in our home, working our way through a lecture series on the English Reformation. We recently covered Latimer and Ridley, known as the *Oxford Martyrs*. I pulled out my copy of *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* just to reacquaint myself and read a fuller account of what happened on October 16, of 1555. Hugh Latimer had been a staunch papist. He was a Roman Catholic who strongly opposed and even wrote against Luther’s Reformation.

God was pleased to send a young Cambridge preacher named Thomas Bilney to evangelize Latimer and to teach him in the Reformed truth. Latimer, after that instruction, abandoned his Catholic faith and started preaching the Reformed faith; became such a

clear, bold witness that he became a threat in some of the Catholic sympathies that still existed in England at the time. Became such a threat that his testimony then was sealed in blood at the ripe old age of 68 years old.

Nicholas Ridley knew Latimer. He was about 20 years younger. He was a bright young scholar who learned about the Reformation while he was doing his studies in France. He memorized epistles of the New Testament. That's an admirable, noble achievement, but Ridley did it in Greek, memorized the epistles of the New Testament in Greek. And he, too, renounced Catholic dogma. He preached Reformation doctrines and eventually became Bishop of Lond, Bishop of London in 1555. When Mary Tudor took the throne, the Roman Catholic daughter of Henry VIII, she tried to aggressively rid England of Protestantism.

She persecuted Reformed scholars and preachers and replaced them with Roman Catholic scholars. She imprisoned untold numbers of Protestants, many of whom died in prison and she formally executed about 300, more than 300 souls. Mary had Latimer and Ridley arrested and imprisoned in the tower of London. And they

were sent to Oxford for a religious trial, a formal trial before their formal execution of burning at the stake. John Foxe writes about the day of their martyrdom.

This is what he says, "When they came to the stake, Mr. Ridley embraced Latimer fervently and bid him, 'Be of good heart, brother. For God will either assuage the fury of the flame or else strengthen us to abide it.' He then knelt by the stake and after earnestly praying together, they had a short, private conversation. A lighted faggot of wood was placed at Dr. Ridley's feet, which caused Mr. Latimer to say, 'Be of good cheer, Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day by God's grace light up such a candle in England as I trust will never be put out.' When Dr. Ridley saw the fire flaming up toward him, he cried out with a wonderful loud voice, 'Lord, Lord, receive my spirit.' Master Latimer crying as vehemently on the other side, 'Oh Father of heaven, receive my soul.' He received the flame as it were, embracing of it."

The barbaric reign of Bloody Mary had an unintended consequence of turning England against her and her barbaric Roman Catholic



faith. God used the martyrdom of Latimer and Ridley as they had hoped and prayed, to light a candle for an English Reformation. And the fire of their sacrifice, it does continue burning today as churches like ours preach the same doctrines, as we proclaim the same truths, as we stand firm. As they did in their day, we stand firm in our own day in the same boldness with the same Reforming spirit.

As we sang earlier, *Solis Christus*, Christ alone is the head of the church since he alone is the Savior of the body. We teach *Sola Scriptura*, the formal principle of the Reformation that Scripture is the sole authority. It is our authority. It is our only standard. *Sola Gratia*, salvation by grace alone by God's sovereign initiative, by his electing grace, his sovereign power. *Sola Fide*, the material principle of the Reformation that salvation is through faith alone, the means of faith, not by any human initiative or any human merit. And of this *Soli Deo Gloria*, salvation for the glory of God and the glory of God alone.

# GRACE CHURCH



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That's the faith that we embrace. That's the faith we confess. It's what we believe. It's what we stand for. So if it comes to our Latimer and Ridley moment, if holding onto that faith comes at the cost of martyrdom, for the right to preach those doctrines, to teach them, to instruct people in those doctrines, do you ever wonder, do you ever wonder about yourself? Whether or not you'll have the courage of conviction to stand and make the good confession, to stand firm, to be a courageous Christian when it counts, to testify to these Gospel truths?

From our text today, I don't want you to be in any doubt about the answer to that question. If it ever comes to that, according to the text before us, we can know for sure that the Spirit himself will cause us to stand firm, that he will enable us and embolden us to make the good confession and we, with our lives, whether in life or in death, will bring glory to God.

Take a look at the text and we're going to start again in Luke 12:4 because this all begins, as we've seen, in the fear of the Lord. If we fear God, we will fear nothing else. Luke 12:4, Jesus says to his friends, "I tell you, my friends, do not fear

those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him, who after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

"And I tell you, everyone who," confess, "confesses me before men, the Son of Man will also will confess," or acknowledge, "before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And," whoever speaks, "everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

Jesus, here, is deepening his disciples' resolve to fear God. He does that by commanding it, obviously, he uses imperatives there at the beginning of the text, but he also deepens the resolve to fear God by commending the fear of God to them. He outlines the benefits here of fearing God, which we started to see last week. Number one, in the fear of God we find Comfort from the Father. That is verses 4 to 7.

Number two, we also find Courage from the son, verses 8 and 9 as he confesses us even before the heavenly courtroom. In the verses before us today, verses 10 to 12, we will find confidence in the Holy Spirit. So, comfort, courage, and confidence for those who fear God.

Those are benefits that come through intimate communion, notice, with the persons of the Trinity. Comfort in knowing the father cares for us, courage in knowing the son confesses us when it counts, confidence in learning from the Spirit who teaches us. And this is what I'm praying, actually, for all of us, for confidence, boldness, conviction in our witness because that's what Jesus is talking about here in this section. It's what he



is preparing his disciples for, to stand firm knowing the father's goodness and care, to confess the truth of Jesus boldly in our own day, and then to testify by the Spirit's power to an unbelieving and often hostile world.

Now if you notice in verse 10, to get where we're going, the Spirit wants us to pass through the gate of Jesus' teaching on the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, also known as the unforgivable sin, also known as the unpardonable sin. Lot of questions I have seen throughout my Christian life, my time, that people have had a lot of questions about. What is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? Can, can people commit it today? Can a Christian commit the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, commit the unpardonable sin?

So we're going to go through the gate of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. In, in doing that, we're going to get an early preview, as I said earlier, an early preview of the Spirit's ministry to us as believers. It's going to be a time for strength and comfort and encouragement because this is a powerful text for the encouragement of believers.

Keep in mind at this point in redemption history, Jesus' disciples have not been able to anticipate, at this point in their thinking, they have not been able to anticipate the church age. I mean, they've read through Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36, other passages in the Old Testament, they understand something of restoration promises involving God's Spirit, but they don't anticipate the church age. They don't anticipate what we're living in right now, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, let alone the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. They think his first advent is the only advent, and he's going to come and conquer, and they'll go on ruling and reigning with him.

So when we read this, we obviously assume all of that history. We've read ahead, so to speak. We know the end of the story. But the disciples don't know what's coming. They don't know what's facing them they're, facing them in a few, few short months from now. They don't know the crucial role the Holy Spirit is going to play in the life and the witness of the church of the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

According to Romans 1:4, Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God in power,” what does it say there? “According to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.” The resurrection itself is a declaration, a proclamation, a teaching, if you will, of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit testifying to the truth about Jesus Christ, testifying to who he is, that he is the Son of God in power.

And that same Spirit who raised Jesus up from the dead is the very one whom Jesus sent to teach and empower the witness of the apostles in Acts Chapter 2. He told them, John 14:25 and 26, he said, “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.” Remember, this is the night of his betrayal. “But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

So the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, giving power, giving remembrance, giving clarity, giving conviction and authority to the apostles’ testimony, absolutely vital for the

establishment of the church, essential ministry from the Holy Spirit and we need to add, a holy ministry. Let everyone be forewarned: Blaspheming the Spirit's testimony will not be forgiven. It is an unpardonable sin.

So we're going to approach these verses today in two parts. Two parts to the sermon here. We're going to ask and answer questions about the text and do it in two parts. Two main questions, number one, what is this doctrine, this blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? What is this teaching? And number two, what is our confidence that comes from this? So what is the doctrine itself? Let's get clarity there. And then what's the confidence that we derive from it? What do we learn from this, and how does it strengthen us and give us confidence? Because I'll tell you what, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the unpardonable sin, the unforgivable sin, has been used exactly opposite of the way Jesus intended it here. It has been used as a threat to Christians. That is completely wrong.

That is completely, completely wrong and I want to disabuse us of any sense that the blasphemy of the holy spirit should be

used to, as a, as a, as a threat, a Sword of Damocles hanging over our heads lest we commit this unpardonable sin. This is, that is not true. So we'll ask those two main questions: what's this doctrine, get clarity about that. And then we'll see what the confidence that comes out of it. We'll ask a number of other clarifying questions, as well.

So let's get right to it. What is this doctrine? Number one, what is this doctrine? And in asking and answering this question, what is this doctrine, we're going to ask and answer several questions, three of them, you can list them as A, B, and C. First, just clearly, what is the blasphemy of the Spirit? Number, the letter B, is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit a sin that can be committed today? So A: What is the blasphemy, what is the sin of the blasphemy of the Spirit? B: Is the blasphemy of the spirit something that can be committed today? Letter C: Can a true, born-again Christian commit the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit?

All right, let's get clarity first, A, what is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? Let's read this in context, by the way, and

start back in verse 8. Jesus says, "Everyone who confesses me before men, the Son of Man will also confess before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And," notice the word, and. And, is to keep these thoughts together, "the one who denies me before men will be denied before angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven."

That is not a warning to Jesus' disciples that when they are confessing him that they somehow need to be careful that they don't inadvertently blaspheme the Holy Spirit in the process. No. Jesus is speaking a word of very strong encouragement to his own disciples and at the very same time, he is delivering a warning to those who would deny him. In fact, there is a promise in verse 10, it's a powerful word of encouragement in verse 10, and especially if your name is Saul of Tarsus.

Earlier in Jesus' Galilean ministry, he confronted this same Beelzebul charge in Luke chapter 11, same charge came up in his Galilean ministry. He confronted this in the scribes and the

Pharisees. Back then, Jesus said, it is recorded in Matthew 12 and Mark chapter 3, as well. Mark 3:28, Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of men." He is basically saying, nothing is unforgivable, including, he says, "whatever blasphemies they utter." Oh, except one. We are finding it here.

Here in Luke 12:10, though, when he speaks of this magnanimous, forgiving grace of God that forgives all sin, whatever blasphemies they utter, Luke's, Luke records Jesus' specificity about the extent of that blasphemy. "Even," he says, "against the Son of Man," even blasphemies, words spoken against the Son of Man. Forgiveness can be extended to that person, too.

Remember, Luke traveled with the Apostle Paul.

No doubt for the Apostle Paul in his own salvation story, his testimony, this promise is particularly meaningful to him, isn't it? Paul had described himself in 1 Timothy 1:13, as having been "a blasphemer, a persecutor, an insolent opponent" of Jesus Christ. He had spoken a word, in, in the words of Jesus here in

Luke Chapter 10, He had spoken a word "against the Son of Man," probably many, many words.

In fact, he had acted on those words by dragging off Christians to prison for that confession, their testimony, throwing them in prison and actually killing them. So yeah, he's a blasphemer, he's a persecutor, he's an insolent opponent of Christ, he has spoken a word against the Son of Man, but God granted him forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ. He acted in ignorance and unbelief, is what he says.

So it is important starting out here to see this warning in Luke 12:10 not as a warning to believers who confess Jesus, but to unbelievers who deny him. That is what the context shows. The immediate context is so important here. This is not a warning to believers who are confessing Christ. This is a warning to the unbelievers who were denying him. If you go so far in denying Christ that you also commit the sin of blaspheming the Spirit, you've crossed the point of no return. That's what he is saying. The immediate context is so important.



What is the sin itself, then? What, what is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? The term, I'm, I'm sure you know this; the term is *blasphemeo*, which is translated right in English as blaspheme. Means to slander, and it means, slander's intended here to damage someone's reputation, destroy the credibility of their testimony. It's, it's premeditated. It's malicious. It's willful. It's intentional.

And that is what the scribes and Pharisees did with Jesus. But how did they commit such a sin against the Holy Spirit? Was it by saying something negative against the Holy Spirit? Really, we can't find that anything in what the, in anything that the scribes or Pharisees said, that they said something specifically negative against the Holy Spirit.

But listen, this is how Charismatic false teachers try to intimidate people and in, and then in the same, at the same time insulate themselves and their teaching from any scrutiny from anybody else. They say if you criticize tongues, you may be guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. If you challenge the claims of miracle workers, be careful you don't blaspheme the



Holy Spirit, that's an unforgiveable, unpardonable sin. If you question any modern-day prophecy, careful, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. You're on thin ice there.

You do not need to be afraid of those threats. You have every right to ask questions. The truth welcomes questions. Be good Bereans and ask good questions. Use discernment when you see something that smells fishy. Call it fish, all right? Challenge it! Bring the truth to bear. Look at the Scripture and see if these things are so.

None of what those Charismatic false teachers do, none of it comes from the Holy Spirit. Oh it may be, may be spiritually inspired, but not by the Holy Spirit. These modern-day snake-oil salesmen, and I should add snake-oil saleswomen, they're the ones who ought to fear the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit because they're doing it all the time. Sometimes when I hear Christians refer to the Holy Spirit with the wrong pronoun, I'm tempted to call, Blasphemy! They, they don't use, you know what I'm saying, they don't use the, he or him; they use an impersonal pronoun, calling him, the Holy Spirit an it.

Have you ever heard this? I have. The theologian, the grammarian in me wants to call, blasphemy! but even that egregious error will be forgiven, actually. Still, could we please agree, here just among us, just, just us around you, and you live-streamers, can we agree to stop calling the precious Holy Spirit an it? He is a person, so his pronouns are he, him, and his. Okay?

But the blasphemy of the Spirit is not that. It's not calling the Holy Spirit an it inadvertently. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not the same as some egregious sin. It's not saying something wrong or false about the Holy Spirit. Is it, we should ask, is it attributing Jesus' miracles to the power of Satan? Now, here is where we are getting some context, some contextual support, attributing Jesus' miracles to the power of Satan. Is that the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit? Look back at Luke 11:14 for a moment. Just flip a page. This is the kind of Pharisaic blasphemy that informs what Jesus is saying here in our text.

Luke 14, or Luke 11:14, "Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. But some of them said, 'He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons.'"

As I said, the Pharisees made that same charge during Jesus' earlier Galilean ministry, Matthew 12:22, Mark 3:22. The connection between that sin, that blasphemy, and this one is the same; it's clear, immediate, obvious, to attribute the works of Jesus that are performed, empowered by the Holy Spirit to attribute those works to the power of Satan that's what they were doing, that is a slander. That is a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. What's the nature of the slander? Technically, it's to say the Holy Spirit is not holy at all. That's the blasphemy.

Instead of holy, he is actually unholy. He's deployed as an agent of Satan, sent to deceive people by energizing this Jesus, just a man, but to energize this Jesus as a false teacher. So this rumor, started by the scribes and the Pharisees to discredit Jesus, to mislead the people, this is an instance of blaspheming the Spirit. To attribute Jesus' miracles to the

power of Satan is an instance of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

It may seem like we've answered the question at this point. That the sin of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is to attribute Jesus' miracles to Satan, to say, "Jesus used Satan's power." And the Holy Spirit, then, is the spirit actually of Satan. That was the exact slander of the scribes and the Pharisees, and it was intended, as I said, to discredit Jesus and his ministry. They wanted people to be afraid of Jesus, to be afraid of what he was saying, lest that he is somehow, he's somehow messing with their minds and that he is able to get in their heads with, with false and twisted teaching.

So they wanted to discredit him so that people would be afraid of him and steer clear of him. They wanted to say that his ministry is really energized by Satan's power. So all these miracles you're seeing, oh yeah, they're miracles. Oh yeah, they're power, but it's not from heaven; it's from below. They're trying to deceive people into thinking Jesus was nothing more than a Satanic imposter empowered by a Satanic spirit.

Now it may seem like we've answered the question, but really, we haven't answered it just yet, almost, not quite. The blasphemy of the Spirit, I would say, is evident in the scribes and the Pharisees, evident in their attributing Jesus' miracles to the power of Satan, but it is not the root of this sin, just one fruit of that sin. We can describe the root of the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit in this way, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is willful hard-hearted unbelief. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is willful hard-hearted unbelief.

When we study that blasphemous charge of the scribes and Pharisees against Jesus back in Luke 11, what we just read from, we noticed how Jesus immediately answered the charge and he picked apart and then completely unraveled their logic in making that charge, that that charge that he casts out demons by Beelzebul the prince of demons.

Jesus knew their thoughts, it says in Luke 11:17. He knew they were just making this up out of whole cloth. They couldn't deny his miracles. But since they refused to believe the Scriptures

that they knew so well, since they refused to accept Jesus is their Messiah sent from God, since they refused to bow the knee, they came up with this ridiculous charge. In verse 17 Jesus confronted that charge, he unravels the logic to it. It exposes, in the process, it exposes their hypocrisy. He says, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls."

In other words, it is completely absurd for Satan, who already owns all these souls, it is completely absurd for Satan to cast out Satan. He's working against himself. It's like starting a restaurant, doing really well, and then starting a competing restaurant right next door and taking away all the customers. Why would you do that? It's like putting a, an outpost in enemy territory, fighting to secure that outpost as a military force and then attacking your own outpost. It's, it's absurd. "If Satan," verse 18, Luke 11:18, "If Satan is divided against himself, how's his kingdom gonna stand?" The charge is absurd on its face.

They're also, though, in their absurdity, they're also inconsistent, wholly inconsistent in applying the charge. Verse 19, "If I cast out demons by Beelzebul..." Whoa, wait a minute, hold on, time out! "By whom do your sons cast them out?" Pretty selective, aren't they? in scrutinizing their own exorcists. They had no reason to believe, no reason whatsoever to believe, Jewish exorcists were able to cast out demons. We read through some of that when we went through some of that text. It's goofy. It's as goofy as modern-day Charismatic teaching. But they had reason to believe that Jesus could. They'd watched it with their own eyes. They'd seen the impossible made possible. His power was obvious, it was undeniable.

So they're inconsistent. They're absurdity in making the charge, and the inconsistency, if that's what they really believe, they're totally inconsistent in applying it to any other exorcist and that exposes their hypocrisy. They don't really believe here, they don't really believe Satan is working through Jesus. It's just a rumor they made up. It's just a lie they chose to believe against all evidence because fundamentally, they willfully will not believe. They refuse to believe the truth.



Again, you need to see this is willful, hard-hearted unbelief and that, folks, is the sin of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. It is willful, hard-hearted unbelief. For the scribes and Pharisees, this is the form it took, this Beelzebul charge. In our day, it can look different. It is not a sin of ignorance. It is not a sin of lacking information.

Remember, these scribes and Pharisees, they're fully informed; their rebellion, then, is against the truth. It's against the light. It's against the Scripture that they know. It's against the clear evidence of the truth right in front of them. It's choosing in the face of all that that's so clear and obvious, it's choosing to believe a lie in the face of irrefutable proof. Think about it. Scribes and Pharisees, right? These are the guys, they're steeped in the Scripture.

They are lifelong Bible students from the time they are little toddlers all the way up into their adulthood. They are the teachers of Israel. They are experts in the law and the prophets. Scribes are the theologians, the Pharisees the

practitioners of what the scribes taught them, the theology they taught. They cultivated this fastidious attention to detail. They had a sharp eye, a keen eye for discernment, biblical discernment. They formulated sound arguments from biblical logic.

Now that Jesus comes, now that Jesus stands in their midst, he is teaching in complete harmony with all the law and the prophets, saying what Moses says all the time, what all the prophets say. His heavenly insight, power in his teaching, performing works of supernatural power. Now that he is there, they find they don't want him. They're not rejoicing in Christ. They're rejecting him as the Christ.

And they have every reason not do that. They're rebelling against Christ's lordship when his entire being commands all men everywhere to repent, to bow at his feet and worship. And their consciences in rejecting Christ, God knows this, their consciences cry out against them because they've abandoned all reason, all sound judgment in order to reject the truth and believe the lie.

So for the scribes and Pharisees to quiet their accusing consciences, they concoct this slanderous lie. They, they spin up this blasphemous charge against the Spirit's clear witness, the Spirit's witness in the Scripture that they've studied, the Spirit's witness in Jesus' teaching that they're hearing, the Spirit's witness in Jesus' miracles that they're watching.

They reject his ministry. They embrace folly. They reject truth to embrace a lie. They abandon light in preference for darkness and by accusing Jesus on the way out of all that, they blaspheme, they blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Big mistake. Grave, grave sin and it's unforgivable. It's an unpardonable sin, eternally consequential sin. From this sin they will never ever recover.

Herman Bavinck wrote this about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, describing it as "a sin against the Gospel in its clearest revelation." That's right. This is sin against the Gospel in its clearest revelation. He goes on to say, "Not in doubting or in simply denying the truth, but in a denial which goes against the conviction of the intellect, against the

enlightenment of the conscience, against the dictates of the heart in a conscious, willful and intentional imputation to the influence and working of Satan, of that which is clearly recognized as God's work and a willful declaration that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the abyss, that the truth is a lie and that Christ is Satan himself." End quote.

So now that we know what the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not and is, now that we have clarity on that, we have a couple more questions to ask. And the major interpretive issued is answered, we can move on a little more quickly. Is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, next question, letter B, I guess: Is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit a sin that can be committed today? Can this sin be committed today? I believe that it is a sin that can be committed today.

But I'll just say that because of the widespread plague of spiritual ignorance in our day, I think it is not a common sin committed today. There are some apostates, they've, having identified themselves as Christians for a time, they walk away from the truth. They walk away, when they walk away, they walk

away at full knowledge, consciences seared. They walk away, in the walking away, they lie about Jesus Christ.

They blaspheme what they've learned, they, what they learn and what they once knew to be true. So this doesn't surprise us because Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2, "The Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared."

Some of you may have heard of more public or renowned figures like Bart Ehrman, Dr. Bart Ehrman, he wrote a book back in 2007 called *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*. Bart Ehrman has been writing blasphemous books ever since. And he might be an example of this kind of apostate, one who is guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. He sins against the things that he knows to be true. He was raised in these truths and he ignores the clear evidence that his scholarship, his, his detailed scholarship and detailed thinking on canon issues, issues of early text and textual criticism, his

scholarly mind has all made that abundantly plain and obvious to him, but he misrepresents all the facts to deceive many who are Christians.

Again, we're not surprised by men like Bart Ehrman because 1 Timothy 4:1, "The," Holy, "Spirit has expressly" told us about this ahead of time so that we can be watching out for it. The Spirit is the truth teacher. He is the one who gives knowledge and discernment to the church, and we're familiar with his ministry through the Scripture, through the teaching ministry of the local church.

But we're seeing the start of the Spirit's ministry in what Jesus has told his disciples right here in Luke 12:10. Can the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit be committed today? I think so, but it takes knowledge and understanding and then a willful rejection of that, and blaspheming Jesus' true ministry and the Spirit's true ministry in the process on the way out. The average pagan that I meet, they don't meet the criteria for understanding. Most of them, just ignorant of what the Bible says, and that is why our teaching ministry is so important in

evangelism to help them understand the truth. There is a lot more to say about all that, but no time to tarry here.

So, one more question, an important one. Can a true, born-again Christian commit this sin? Can a true Christian commit the unpardonable sin, the unforgivable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, even if he does it inadvertently? No, most emphatically, no! A true, born-again Christian may not, cannot, will not do this. I hope that's clear in everything we've learned so far. That a true, born-again Christian cannot commit the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Now, can a professing, apparent Christian commit the sin of blasphemy? Yes, absolutely. A professing, but not true Christian, someone who appears to be a Christian on the outside, maybe who has been with the church a long, long time, but never been born-again within their heart, born-again internally, can that person commit this? Yeah, absolutely.

We're not talking about that. We're talking about true, born-again Christians. They've had something happen to them from

outside of them. The Spirit has caused them to be born again, which means that all their sin, past, present, future, sins of omission and commission, sins of thought, word and deed, everything, every way they didn't love God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, every way they didn't love their neighbor as themselves, and everything summing up the law and prophets, whatever sin they've committed, for a true Christian, that has been put on Jesus Christ. He has been crucified for their sin. So, no. There is no sin for a Christian that is unpardonable or unforgivable. No. It's all been pardoned already.

Also, since the sin of the blasphemy of the Spirit is a sin of willfulness, no Christian can commit this sin inadvertently. It's not something you stumble into. It's not something that you commit without knowledge or without premeditation. So on that count, too, a Christian cannot commit this sin. And since the blasphemy of the Spirit is what is called a high-handed sin, it's a sin of hard-heartedness.



That means that any Christian, and I, I know you've met them, I've met them, I've tried to counsel them, they're sensitive-conscience people. They're sometimes morbidly introspective and struggling with assurance all of their Christian life. You just want to speak words of comfort and encouragement and strength to their hearts, but try as you might, they still struggle, right?

And that person, Christian, true Christian worries about whether or not he's committed the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Have I committed the unpardonable sin? Oh, no! Have I committed the unforgivable sin? Their worry, though, it's totally misguided and totally unwarranted, their worry is proof their heart is what? Soft, not hard. It's soft. Someone who has committed this blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, an unpardonable and unforgivable sin, they're like, yeah? And what of it? That person is hard-hearted and unconcerned.

In fact, like Bart Ehrman, he may express pride in his unbelief. Some of these new atheists they've been bold, bold in blaspheming God. They say, look, I, I understand all this, and I'm going to agree with the scribes and the Pharisees. So with a

seared conscience, that person is far from salvation because they've counted themselves out of the only means of salvation. It's the Holy Spirit's testimony to Christ. According to this verse, they are in an unredeemable, unpardonable condition.

Now, I'll just quickly add here that you and I can't know the heart. I mean, even for Bart Ehrman, if I get the chance to meet Bart Ehrman, I'm going to preach the Gospel to him with a hope that somehow there is some kind of ignorance in him. I don't hear it. I hear, I hear him understanding everything he is saying, clearly. But I'm going to preach, I'm gonna preach the Gospel to him, if for chance he hasn't committed this sin. But for a true, born-again Christians to commit the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, it is impossible by definition to do this.

And here's where we're going to transition to our second question. Now that we've understood what this sin is, and we've defined it here, we're going to transition to the second question. The fact that the Christian cannot commit this sin, it becomes a huge source of confidence for us. So second question, number two, what is our confidence? What is our confidence? Here's where we're going to dig into the verses a little bit

more. Luke 12:10 to 12, so we can see how this section lists further benefits for those who fear God.

We're going to see how Jesus points us to the confidence that comes by the Spirit's teaching ministry in three things: in believing, in preaching, and in testifying to the truth. In believing the truth, preaching the truth, or, or in some people who aren't maybe pastors and teachers, evangelizing, discipling. So teaching, preaching the truth, so in believing the truth, preaching the truth, and testifying to the truth. Make those three sub-points A, B, and C.

Sub-point A: So confidence in believing. This is what we are to see from the Spirit's teaching ministry. If we springboard from what we just learned, since it's impossible for a true born-again Christian to commit the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, by confessing Jesus, Luke 12:8, our believing and confessing gives us great confidence that we belong to him. Just by believing it, we have confidence. By confessing Jesus, we have great confidence we belong to him, and we know that we will because of that go on believing and go on belonging.

Paul tells us about this in just a very quick statement at the beginning of Rom, or 1 Corinthians Chapter 12, 1 Corinthians 12:3 says. And, and by the way, the Corinthian church, they are completely confused about the ministry of the Spirit. They are completely confused, I mean they've got people who are standing up and speaking words of prophecy in their church and saying, Jesus, be accursed. Wh-what? No, it's a prophecy from the Holy Spirit, you need to believe me. They're believing that. They're tolerating that kind of thing.

So Paul says, "I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says," he's emphatic here, "no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, 'Jesus is accursed!' and no one can say." It's a word that talks about ability. "No one is able to say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit." In other words, the Holy Spirit will always and only give a true testimony about Jesus.

So when you confess Jesus is Lord, when you confess him for who he really is, you need to realize that testimony didn't come

from you. You are a channel, a vessel of the Spirit's voice. It does not come from you on your own, in your own intellect, in your own power, by your own wisdom, in no other influence, just you and your own thoughts. You didn't intuit this. You didn't study so hard and come up with this great doctrine. You can only confess Jesus is Lord by the Holy Spirit.

"By this you know the Spirit of God," 1 John 4:2, "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." "The Spirit is the one who testifies," 1 John 5:6, "because the Spirit is the truth." So if you confess Jesus, to confess, remember we talked about this last time? *Homologeo*, to confess, first means we say the same thing about Jesus that God says about Jesus. We're not talking about just a superficial speaking about it. We're talking about truly embracing it, speaking of what we know. We say, think, speak about Jesus the same thing that God does.

Second, confession, confess means to confess loyalty, to profess loyalty or allegiance to him as Lord. So what do we have? We have intellectual understanding, we have affections embracing,

and we have will obeying. That's what it is to confess Jesus as Lord. It is not a superficial, I believe in Jesus. It's not a superficial, Jesus died for my sins. It's not a superficial, I walked an aisle. I was baptized. I signed a card. I raised my hand. It's not a superficial, I prayed a prayer one time. This is your whole life. That confession does not come from you. The good confession comes from the God who gave you the Holy Spirit.

The same thing Peter learned Matthew 16:17. After he made the good confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," what did Jesus tell him? "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father who is in heaven." Jesus is not rebuking or correcting Peter for his confession. He's not trying to put him in his place lest Peter start to think highly of himself, which Peter did.

But Jesus is there not correcting or rebuking; he's strengthening Peter. He is strengthening his faith. He is trying to give him confidence in believing that this isn't dependent on him. It's God that did this in him. Peter's believing confession

is evidence of the supernatural work of God in his life. It's evidence of the Spirit's ministry. It's supernatural.

It's the same thing for you and me, beloved, who are in Christ. Same thing for us. You will never be guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, not ever! Because that sin comes from another spirit, one who is not from God. When you make the good confession when you are living a life of loyalty in allegiance to, allegiance to Jesus Christ.

And I know that not any of us are perfect, but is there a trajectory in your life where you can see a before and after? Are there affections of righteousness in your heart, where you love truth and righteousness and hate all that offends God just simply because it offends God? Is your life filled with an increasing desire to obey, and you see actual obedience in your life?

Great confidence in believing. You'll never be guilty of this sin. When you make this good confession, when you live out this good confession, that is evidence, proof positive that you are a

believer, that God has granted you the Holy Spirit. And you find great confidence in believing because it's only by the Spirit that we believe and confess because he is your teacher.

He gives such strength and such confidence here in the immediate context to Jesus' Apostles, to Jesus' disciples, because it's all going to be put on the line for them. As they preach the Gospel, as they testify before impenitent blasphemers, they themselves will be protected by the faith that they have received from God by the Holy Spirit. They have no cause for fear, no cause of falling into this same sin of blasphemy whatsoever because their faith is not up to them.

Ultimately, it's a gift of God, and the Spirit holds them fast. We can have the same confidence in believing. The Holy Spirit has given us the ability. He's given us the will to believe, confess the truth, and it's evident in confessing Jesus as Lord. "For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord," Romans 10:9, "and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead." Listen, you've listened to the Holy Spirit. You've



listened to his ministry; you've listened to his teaching, and you will be saved.

What do we do about this as a practical point of application? We can start by giving thanks and then never stop. I mean, isn't this awesome that we have come to understand what you can only understand by God's power and by God's working? I mean, why are we so privileged? Give thanks and never stop giving thanks. Have a spirit of gratitude all of your life.

We believe when others don't. We believe when they scoff. We praise when others mock; we sing when others groan; we give thanks when other people grumble and complain. We need to thank God he's chosen to save us, to give us eyes of faith, and he set us free. That is one thing we can do because of this doctrine, because we've believed.

Secondly, we can also double down on fearing God, like Jesus is saying in this text. We can take God at his Word; believe everything he's revealed in his written Word, give others, give others a, a cheerful example of our obedience so we trust this.

That's the true freedom of the children of God, to obey what God has revealed. So confidence in believing that leads to giving thanks, becoming more resolute in fearing God. In fact, the fear of God drives us deeper in his Word. Deeper in his Word.

And that brings us to another point, sub-point B, confidence in preaching, confidence in preaching. The Spirit gives us confidence in our preaching, our proclamation, our evangelism, our discipleship, our teaching because we ourselves are taught by the Spirit. It's a promise of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:34, "No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord." All will know. How does everyone know from the least to the greatest? How do they know the Lord? How do they know Yahweh?

Another New Covenant promise in Ezekiel 36:26 and 27, "I will give you," God says, "a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you." What's he talking about there? Regeneration, being born again, John Chapter 3, Titus Chapter 3. "I'll remove the heart of stone from your flesh and," I'll, "give you a heart of

flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you," it's the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit, our resident truth teacher. "I'll give you my Spirit, I'll put," his, put "him within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

In any reading of the Old Testament, we see they had the law, they had the prophets. They didn't have a heart to obey. God gives us a heart to obey. He gives us, he causes us to "walk in his statutes and to be careful to obey his rules." What a joy!

So those who know God, being taught by the Spirit of God, they have great, great boldness in preaching. They know the truth. They apprehend and understand it with the intellect, a redeemed intellect, a born-again intellect. Then they wholly embrace it with born-again affections, what they love and what they hate has been completely reversed from what they were as unbelievers. And then they practice it with the will. What they could not do by the law, they now have spirit-empowered obedience. So they go from what's written in the text to walking righteously before God. And they rejoice. And what they speak, what they know in

the mind, the affections and the wisdom that comes from practice, practiced, lived-out experience. That gives them confidence in their teaching. It's all from the Spirit.

Jesus tells them, Luke 12:11, "And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities," when that happens, "do not worry about" it. That's the command there. One command: Don't worry. Don't worry about it. What is the occasion of the Apostles being dragged before the authorities? When did that happen? It was on the day of Pentecost, right?

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, it says over here in Acts Chapter 2, verses 22 and 23, "Men of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know, this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."

Down in verse 36, he says, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and



Christ, who this Jesus whom you crucified." Bold stuff, isn't it? I mean he's staring them down. He's looking them directly in the eye, pointing the finger at those who killed the Messiah and saying, you did this. You crucified, killed Jesus, the one whom God made both Lord and Christ. You killed him. These are regenerate men, and they are teaching and preaching truth that they own because the Spirit taught them. This truth they received by revelation from the Spirit of God.

Turn just quickly to John's Gospel. I just want you to see this for yourself. These are some misapplied texts that I want you to be clear about. John's Gospel, starting in John 14:26. These men listening to Jesus in Luke 12, they're, some of them the Apostles, Jesus is going to tell them in the Upper Room on the night of his betrayal, John 14:26, he's going to give them a promise. And this promise is for Jesus' Apostles. It's a promise to instill confidence in their preaching.

He says, "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the father will

send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

Later on that night, turn over to John 16 verse 7, Jesus gives the Apostles further assurance. He instills even more confidence in them to preach the truth boldly and fearlessly. He says, "I tell you the truth," John 16:7, "it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I don't go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

Skip down to verses 13 to 15. When the Spirit of truth comes, what's he going to do? "He's gonna guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the father has is mine; and therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

Go back to what we started the service with, 1 Corinthians chapter 2, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2:7 and following. This is

where we see this applied. Again, it's not applied to us in our personal devotions directly, but indirectly. What God revealed to the Apostles through the Holy Spirit. These things have been recorded by the same Spirit in Scripture.

It says in 1 Corinthians 2:7, "We impart a secret, hidden wisdom of God, what God decreed before the ages for our glory." verse 9 "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him" verse 10, "these things God has revealed to us." Who is the us? Paul and the other Apostles. Paul, the other acquaintances of the Apostles, the early evangelists who built the church, founded the church. "These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." "We have received," verse 12, "not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who's from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God."

That is what we impart, is what God has given to the Apostles by the Spirit. We teach those things, it says in verse 13, "Not in words taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, we

interpret spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.”

Interesting verb that is used there. It’s taking things that are spiritual and combining or joining them to those who are spiritual. Spiritual things from God joined together with believers. That’s what he is saying. So what God revealed to the Apostles through the Spirit, these things are recorded by the same Spirit on the pages of Scripture. And that is why Paul says down at the end of verse 16, “We have the mind of Christ.” Where do we have it? Written right here. Written right here.

How do we apply this to ourselves? It’s not by believing John 16 is a promise to us as individuals, that we should expect some private revelation from the Holy Spirit. No, we apply this by reading and studying and meditating upon and obeying what is written in the Word of God. And guess what happens? We grow in confidence in our preaching. Just like the Apostles had confidence in their preaching, we, too, have confidence in our preaching because it’s what we know. It’s what we believe. It’s what we love. It’s what we obey and practice and live. And that strengthens our witness.



News of the Apostles preaching reached the ears of the Jewish leadership back in, go back to Luke 12. This led to a more formal inquiry. This is where the Apostles' resolve is put on display. Brings us to a final sub-point, the rest of what Jesus said in Luke 12:11 and 12. Sub-point C: we gain confidence in testifying by the Spirit's work. confidence in testifying. Once more, the Holy Spirit teaches God-fearing believers so that we can have great, great confidence when it comes time for us to testify to the truth.

Jesus said verse 11 and 12, "When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought," or what is necessary for you, "to say."

Synagogue refers to local authority. Synagogues, like their local church where they have to confess before hometown family, friends, people who know them. There is a price to pay locally for going against a prevalent opinion against Christ. There's a community censure applied through the synagogue, even through

excommunication. The rulers, that represent the Jewish higher courts, Sanhedrin, formal judgment, strictures applied by priests in the temple and rulers in synagogue.

Authorities, broad comprehensive reference to power and authority like the Gentile courts, Herod the King, Roman Pontiffs, even Caesar's Court. ESV's pretty mild in translating the word, "when they bring you before the courts." Rather, read that, "When they drag you, when they drag you like prisoners before the court and cast you before them." That's the occasion. Jesus says to them, "Don't be anxious."

Almost synonymous with what he said back in verse 4, "Do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing they can do to you." Verse 7, "Fear not; you are of more value," to God, "than many sparrows." Same here, Don't be anxious, don't be afraid. What's the temptation for anxiety on this occasion? Being dragged before the courts? How you should defend yourself, what you should say? In the original, there are three causes for concern. NAS translate this well, it says, "Do not become anxious about how or what you should speak in your defense."

That word for defense is *apologeomai*. It's to make a defense.  
Apolo, apologetics, we get the word from there.

Do not be anxious about how you make your defense or what you say as you make your defense or what you should say more generally, more broadly in that hour. Don't worry about the manner of your defense. Don't worry about the content of your defense. Don't worry about anything else you say, positively, negatively in that hour because you have confidence in believing you know that you will by no means say anything to blaspheme the Holy Spirit because you're a believer.

You can have confidence in your preaching because God has given you that same Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him that the Apostles had. The same Holy Spirit he has gave to his Apostles, he's given to you as well. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead you have as well.

So read, study, obey what the Spirit revealed through the Apostles in the Word of God. You're going to grow in the same Spirit and proclaiming the truth and then, you can have

confidence in your testifying. Should you or I ever come to a Latimer and Ridley moment, when we're tied up, when the wood is around us, laid around us and the match is lit, when our confidence is put to the greatest test, testifying will, may cost us our lives, Jesus says, "Do not fear, don't be anxious by what or how you defend yourself or what you should say, for," what's he say, "the Spirit will teach you in that very hour." He will strengthen you in that very moment. This isn't something you plan for. It is not something you prepare for; it is something he gives you in the moment. He'll give you what you need to say.

You're never on your own as a Christian. Jesus himself said Matthew 28:20, "Behold, I am with you always to the end of the age." Hebrews 13:15, he said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." How does he, how is he always with us? How does he never leave us or forsake us? By the Spirit he gave to abide with us and in us. It's the Spirit who enables us to make that good confession, to stand firm, to speak boldly for him.

Isn't that a great encouragement as we read through the rest of the Book of Acts and see the power and the strength and the authority of the Apostles? They were known as untrained men, and yet they were besting all the scholars in Israel. God will give us that same strength, beloved. Same is true of us. Because of the Spirit's teaching ministry, we all have confidence in believing, and preaching, and testifying to the truth. May God count us faithful when our moment comes. Let's pray.

Our Father, we're so grateful for the encouragement that you give us, and you gave it to us specifically, most evidently, in our champion, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful beyond words. The depth of our gratitude it's just, is endless as we think about what we owe to you. Gratitude is the least, we can give, and yet it is exactly what you command. So help us to be grateful, cheerful, joyful Christians, who wake up every day pinching ourselves, wondering how it is that we can be counted among the elect of God, that you would cause us to be born again to this living hope, that we, too, could join the witness of the Apostles and the prophets, all those men and women of church history who have stood firm when the time of testing came. They

were bold evangelists when there was no test. They made hay while the sun was shining, and while there was no sun at all.

So we pray, Father, that you would give us the same strength, the same boldness. Help us to be of the same Spirit, to be wholeheartedly devoted to Jesus Christ, whose saving Gospel to this Reformation truth of these five *solas* that we love and proclaim today. We thank you for the witnesses that have gone before us, and we pray you would give us the strength to stand with them in our own time. In Jesus' name we pray, for your glory and by your abiding and indwelling Holy Spirit. Amen.